



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Secretary General of the Organization to the Islamic Conference, Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 6, 2010

Dr. Ihsanoglu, we warmly welcome you here to the OSCE and we appreciate your interest in the OSCE and your productive contributions to past OSCE conferences on combating intolerance.

The United States shares your concerns about the rise of hatred and intolerance, which are a serious threat to security. Combating them requires the coordinated efforts of the OSCE, OIC, and other international organizations. In recent months we have witnessed disturbing reminders that combating discrimination requires our urgent attention. We are deeply disturbed with the targeting of members of religious minorities and outbreaks of inter-religious violence in virtually every region of the world. These worrying developments demonstrate the need for the international community to take concerted action to challenge stereotyping, discrimination, and violence motivated by racial or religious hatred with an action-oriented approach that combats discrimination and intolerance without limiting the freedoms of expression and religion.

We believe that governments already have tools to address intolerance, including education, inter-religious dialogue, and robust legal protections against discrimination and hate crimes. We also believe that it is the duty of all governments to respect the ability of every individual to profess and practice his or her own faith. To that end, the United States remains committed to working with governments around the world to promote mutual understanding and respect of human rights, including religious freedom and freedom of expression.

President Obama's June 4, 2009 speech in Cairo was comprehensive in its call for "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world." The President called for a new relationship based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual responsibility; a shared commitment to universal values; and a comprehensive engagement with governments and citizens alike.

The Cairo speech articulated an overarching vision and set of principles guiding U.S. policies and engagement with Muslims throughout the world. The President announced specific projects and commitments and we are delivering many of them -- including a partnership with the OIC to eradicate polio.

The U.S. Government is also engaged every day in activities that reflect the principles President Obama set forth in Cairo. These activities include our foreign policies, as well as our foreign assistance efforts, public diplomacy programs, exchanges, and the outreach efforts of the President's Special Envoy to the OIC.

We recognize that the vision the President advanced in Cairo is a long-term effort. Our success will be measured in part by the quality, impact, and sustainability of the partnerships

that we build together. We need partners at the local, national, and international levels who are willing to reach out and with whom we can work towards shared policy goals and programs. This is the essence of mutual responsibility, which will lay the foundation for lasting security and stability in all our countries.

Thank you again, Dr. Ihsanoglu, for your appearance here today. We wish you all success in your important work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.